



# 2011 Season Report

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Utah Fire and Rescue Academy Wildland Fire Crew  
State of Utah ♦ Division of Forestry, Fire and State Lands  
271 West Bitterbrush Lane ♦ Draper, UT 84020

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# Fire Season Overview

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UFRA's 2011 fire season was comprised of three out of state tours, many dispatches to the local BLM desert and 2 forest service fires on the Wasatch Front. We made significant progress toward becoming a Hotshot Crew successfully completing many of the tasks specified by the Hotshot Operations Guide. Starting 2012, UFRA will change its logo and name to Alta.



## **Wallow Fire 2 June to 21 June**

Our first fire of the season was the Wallow fire in east central Arizona. The call came just as the crew was finishing a week of project work in southwest Utah. UFRA pulled off the hill, switched from project operations to fire operations and started south.

We arrived late that night as the incident was in transition to a type one organization. We didn't get a briefing until the following morning. Active fire behavior and large growth dictated indirect tactics. UFRA began to prep roads for burnout operations. This tactic appeared successful, however, long range spotting ignited fires across control lines forcing us to pull back and burn out around threatened residences.

The fire was still growing as we neared our 14 day mark so we offered and received approval to extend the tour.



The Wallow was nearly contained when we demobed after nearly three weeks of mostly prep and burn shifts.



The Wallow had many physical and mental challenges. Long shifts of prep and burn in rugged terrain with little rest was an experience no UFRA crew member will soon forget. The success achieved on the Wallow fire set the stage for the remainder of the season which proved to have many challenging and rewarding experiences.

## **Southwest Region 28 June to 13 July**

After 2 mandatory days off and a day and a half of training at the shop, UFRA was back on the road. We filled the Gila National Forest's request for a hand crew on a severity detail.

We didn't have to wait long for work as we could see smoke as we approached Silver City. UFRA assisted local resources on the Marinas fire at the edge of town. After containing it that evening we were heading back to our original destination, Membres Ranger District.

We staged two days before being dispatched to the Bennett fire on Socorro district BLM just north of the Mexican border. After two shifts on the Bennett, UFRA was heading north and picked up a new assignment.



The Sandia Ranger District near Albuquerque was experiencing extremely dry conditions and had received lightning. UFRA filled their need to have a hand crew available for new starts.

On our sixth day of patrolling, staffing road closures and being ready to jump on any new starts, UFRA was reassigned to the Los Conchas fire on the neighboring Santa Fe National Forest. Our assignments on the Los Conchas consisted of 3 shifts of contingency road prep before timing out on day 14.

## **Salt Lake District BLM 16 July to 23 July**

After the season's second set of mandatory days off the phone rang again. The west desert was starting to dry out and the El Nino influenced late winter and wet spring had encouraged record fuel loading of fine grasses.

We attacked 4 west desert fires during one week in July; Lakeside, Patterson Pass, Dyno and the Topliff fires. UFRA experienced active fire behavior in light flashy fuels and brush on these fires where swatters proved effective.



## **More Local Fire 27 July to 19 August**

Mid-season was a mix of fire and project work. No fire orders came until July 27<sup>th</sup> when a Wasatch Front fire just east of I-15 started. The Rudd Canyon fire in the Farmington foothills burned into the oak brush for a total of approximately 7 acres. Two shifts were required to contain and control the Rudd Canyon fire.

Six days later we were heading back to the west desert, west of Utah Lake for the Soldier fire. The Soldier fire was close to containment when UFRA arrived and looked to be a mop show. However, a nearby new start moving toward the Soldier made things more interesting.



We moved from the Soldier to initial attack the Chaparral fire. Two days were required to contain the Chaparral fire after which the crew was released as incoming resources took over mop up responsibilities.



We spent the remainder of that forty hour week eradicating juniper back in the west desert, in the Government Creek area.

After finishing the week, we returned to Lone Peak, finished rehab and were ready to start the weekend when the order for the Gap fire came. Near Scipio Utah, the Gap fire resulted from a vehicle trailer incident that sparked fire for a mile along the east side of highway 50 just south of Scipio.

We arrived with a couple hours of daylight remaining and began securing the edge of this pinion juniper fire, and the following day continued into steep, rugged terrain, identifying and securing spots. The third shift on the fire brought rain and the Gap was soon controlled.

### **West Desert-Southern Utah-Montana August 20 to September 12**

August 20<sup>th</sup> and the Elderberry Fire in Salt Lake District BLM turned out to be the start of a 22 day roll. In addition to the Elderberry, this roll

included one fire in southern Utah, and six fires in central and western Montana.

The Elderberry fire didn't turn out to be as much a problem as initially predicted by air attack and the two crews ordered completed perimeter mop up in one shift.



UFRA was back at project work in the mountains outside Beaver Utah the following Monday. Just two hours south of the project site, in the Kolob Terrace area near Zion National Park a fire was sparked by a scrap metal cutting project. Our proximity to the fire enabled us to respond quickly.

We worked late into the night chasing active fire through rugged desert terrain and up to the base of the cliffs. Aggressive initial attack limited growth to the fire's first shift. Two additional shifts of mop up controlled the KT fire.

Enroute home to Draper, UFRA received an order for the Diamond Complex in central Montana. We continued north to Casper, Wyoming and remained there overnight. Next morning, UFRA was redirected to a new start on the White Sulfur Springs district of the Louis and Clark NF.

We arrived on the Elk Park fire that afternoon and again chased fire into the night, successfully checking active fire and limiting growth. Moderate to heavy brush and timber with grass understory combined with gusty wind sustained fire growth into our second operational period.

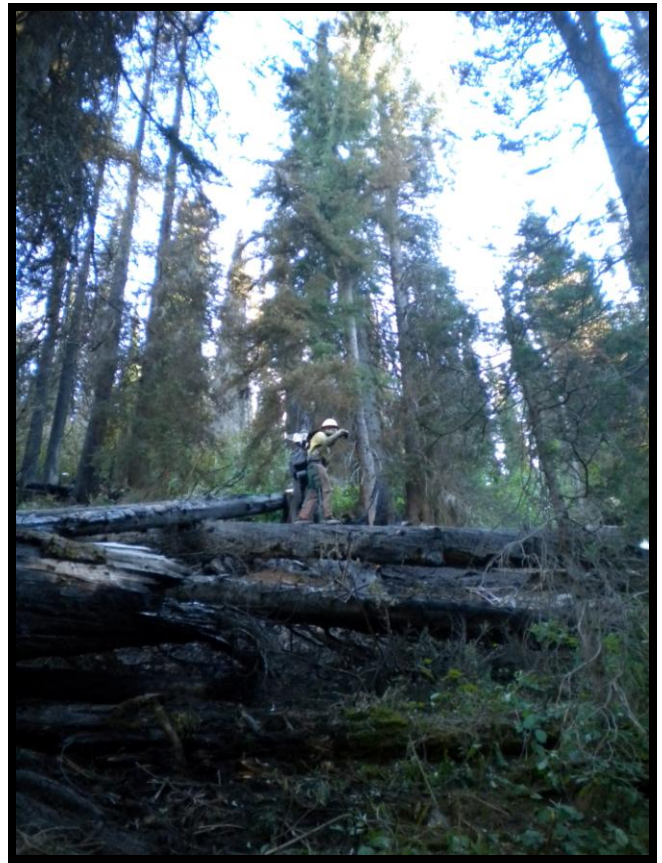
Air support and a second crew on our flank helped hold what we had gained the previous night and allowed us to continue into unchecked territory.



After two shifts of checking active fire we shifted into mop up and were made available for initial attack. The following day UFRA was reassigned to the Lolo NF in western Montana where resources were spread thin and a recent lightning bust had fire officials nervous.

UFRA arrived at the 9 mile ranger district and split into two modules. Half the crew was immediately heading further west to respond to the Spring Creek fire while the other half remained ready.

The Spring Creek fire was a lightning holdover adjacent to the urban interface. Initial attack with engines and aircraft kept the fire small. UFRA engaged checking the edge and moving into mop up. Reinforced by the other half of the crew, Spring Creek was contained in two operational periods.



UFRA supported suppression efforts on five fires in eleven days on the Lolo. Tactics included fire line explosives, spike out, and palm IR, on timber, brush, vehicle and urban interface fires. When not assigned to fires we supported the forest's ongoing restoration projects on our 22 day tour.

Immediately following the Montana tour, UFRA received an order for the Parish fire. It was the crew's second fire on the Wasatch Front this season and was within five miles of the Rudd Canyon fire described earlier.

Being later in the season the oak brush common in this area had dried out relative to the brush on the Rudd Canyon fire, yet initial attack resources held it to 14 acres. Cool weather, rain and quality mop-up including multiple grids through oak brush controlled the Parish Fire in its second operational period.



## **Back in West Desert October 1 to October 5**

After a two week absence of fire at the end of September, the crew was excited to be heading back to the west desert. When UFRA arrived on the Hancock fire, it was 400 acres.

Fire behavior was beginning to pick up with the changing conditions that accompanied day break. We successfully engaged the west flank during the first operational period, but wind pushed the fire east two more days for a total of 1400 acres.



During our second shift on the Hancock, an understaffed fire at Timpie Springs was growing and needed a crew. UFRA was temporarily reassigned to the south end of the Great Salt Lake and engaged what would be our last opportunity of the season for initial attack and suppression of active fire.

Armed with tools including a complement of swatters, we made quick work of the Timpie II fire. The crew chased it, with helicopter support, up the steep rocky terrain to the base of the cliff. On our 2<sup>nd</sup> shift we flew to top of the fire to perform mop up and make sure that the Timpie II was done. If there was any doubt, the following morning's rain eliminated it.

The weather was changing to the cool temperature and moisture normal for fall in northern Utah; however there was unfinished business back on the Hancock. UFRA returned to the south end of Utah Lake and put the finishing touches on the Hancock.



The rain that fell during our last shift foreshadowed not only the end of the Hancock fire but also the end of a great fire season for the 2011 UFRA crew.



Thanks to the UFRA crew and to the Lone Peak Staff for the enormous amount of hard work, dedication, and diligence that made 2011 a great fire season.

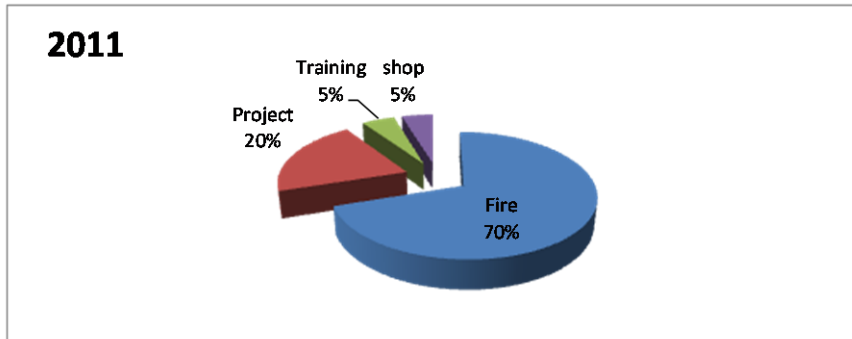


# Assignment Summary

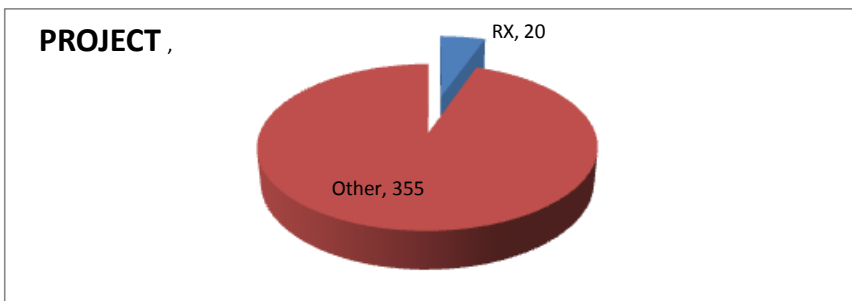
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The 2011 season included a variety of assignments. The following tables are a breakdown showing how time was spent during the season from May 3<sup>rd</sup> to October 31<sup>st</sup>.

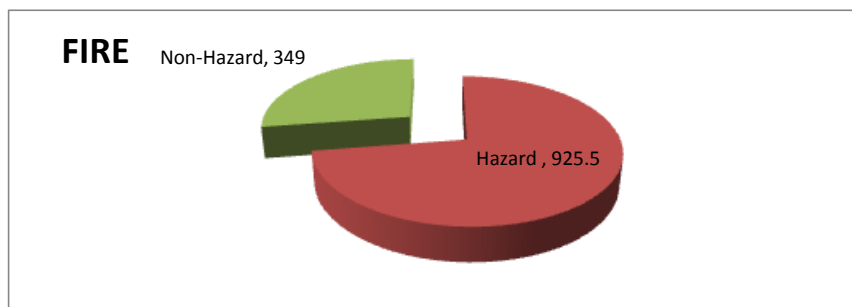
All time totals = 1823 hours



Project Time total = 375 hours



Fire hour total = 1274.5



## **Fire Table**

This table illustrates the number of fires in which UFRA engaged, the multiple complexity levels and fuel types involved, and the dates for operational assignments.

Incident Dates	State	Risk Type	Fuel Type	Fire Size	Incident Name
June 3-20	AZ	I	2,5,10	E	Wallow
June 29	MN	IV	6	E	Marenas
July 2-3	MN	IV	8,10	F	Bennett
July 10-12	MN	I	6	C	Las Conchas
July 16-18	UT	III	2	C	Lakeside
July 19-20	UT	IV	8,10	C	Patterson Pass
July 21-22	UT	IV	1,2,6	G	Topliff
July 22-23	UT	III	2,4,6,8,10	F	Dyno
July 28-29	UT	IV	6,8	C	Rudd Canyon
Aug. 6	UT	IV	2,10	F	Soldier
Aug. 6-8	UT	III	2,4,6,8,10	G	Chaparral
Aug. 11-14	UT	III	2,4,6,8,10	G	Gap
Aug. 20	UT	IV	1,2,6	F	Elderberry
Aug. 22-24	UT	IV	6,8	C	KT
Aug.26-30	MT	III	2,5,10	D	Elk Park
Aug. 30-31	MT	IV	2,5,10	B	Spring Creek
Sept. 1-2	MT	IV	2,5,10	B	Trail Creek
Sept. 4-5	MT	IV	2,5,10	B	Cold RG
Sept. 7-8	MT	IV	2,5,10	B	Dykstra Hill
Sept. 7-8	MT	V	2,5,10	B	7 Mile
Sept. 16	UT	III	6,8	B	Parrish
Oct. 1-5	UT	III	2	F	Hancock
Oct. 2-3	UT	IV	2	C	Timpie II

# Project Summary

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During the 2011 fire season, the UFRA crew completed many projects while not fighting fire. The crew used the time on project to reinforce values of discipline, hard work, and respect. Many opportunities for crewmember training on chainsaw and chipper operations strengthened our crew. An enormous amount of manual labor was completed for state cooperators and they were very pleased with UFRA's performance.



The UFRA crew earned the LPCC award "Outstanding Performance on a Project" for their effort on the Red Canyon project near Parowan, Utah. The crew maintained the same high level of dedication and performance that was recognized on the Red Canyon project in every project they completed.



The UFRA crew gained valuable experience working in three separate eco types. The 2011 projects were split between working in Pinion Pine and Juniper, Mixed Conifer, and Tamarisk and Russian Olive.

From burning piles near the Jordan River to cutting large diameter spruce at 10,000 feet elevation, the UFRA crew successfully completed diverse projects during 2011. The crew was able to adapt to each assignment and provide a valuable service to the State of Utah.



## Season Data Summary

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Number of days the crew was available:	178
Number of days committed to incidents:	81
Number of days in training:	9
Number of 14-day assignments:	3 (2 extended to 21 days)
Number of days paid R & R:	5
Number of days on type I/II incidents:	21
Number of days on type III/IV/V incidents:	60
Number of days in travel status:	6
Number of crew helicopter flights:	1
Number of Career personnel:	5
Number of vacant career positions:	0
Number of days on project:	38
Number of vehicle accidents:	0
FFT1/ICT5 task books completed:	1
ICT IV task books completed	1

## **2011 UFRA Crew**

<b><u>Name</u></b>	<b><u>Position</u></b>	<b><u>Duration</u></b>
Wade Snyder	Crew Boss	Permanent
Scott Nielson	Assistant Crew Boss	Permanent
James Pummel	Squad Boss	Permanent
Davis Oatway	Squad Boss	Permanent
Jesse Trembly	Squad Boss	Permanent
Mike Cuniff	Lead Crewmember	Full Season
Jeff Priebe	Lead Crewmember	Full Season
Nate Hallows	Lead Crewmember	Full Season
Matthew Schutt	Sawyer	Full Season
Paul Harrie	Sawyer	Full Season
Mario Giacobassi	Sawyer	Full Season
Dallas McQuillan	Sawyer	Full Season
Dan Walton	Sawyer	Full Season
Payden Thompson	Crewmember	Full Season
Gavin Young	Crewmember	Full Season
Dan Stansell	Crewmember	Full Season
Ned McFarlane	Crewmember	May 3 to Sept. 12
Dain Christensen	Crewmember	May 3 to Aug. 11
Tyson Forbes	Crewmember	May 3 to Aug. 11
Mike Jewett	Crewmember	Aug. 18 to Oct. 31
Seth Spain	Crewmember	Aug. 18 to Oct. 27
Cameron Shaughnessy	Sawyer	Aug. 20 to Sept.12
Lowden Perkins	Crewmember	Aug. 21 to Oct. 27
Kelly Watts	Crewmember	Sept. 19 to Oct. 27
Micah Hansen	Crewmember	June 27 to Sept. 16

## **2011 UFRA Detailers**

Thank you to all the personnel who came from other crews and stepped up to help fill open positions on UFRA enabling the crew to stay available for the duration of fire season.

- Mike Jewett: Dromedary Peak Fuels Module
- Seth Spain: Dromedary Peak Fuels Module
- Cameron Shaughnessy: Dromedary Peak Fuels Module
- Kelly Watts: Dromedary Peak Fuels Module

## 2011 UFRA Crew Photograph

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**Back Row** (left to right): Mike Cuniff, Paul Harrie, Dallas McQuillan, LeRoy Christensen, Dan Walton, and Davis Oatway

**Middle** (left to right): Nate Hallows, Jeff Priebe, Micah Hansen, Gavin Young, Mario Giacobassi, Ned McFarlane, Tyson Forbes, James Pummel, Wade Snyder, and Matt Schutt

**Front Row** (left to right): Payden Thompson, Dan Stansell, Jesse Trembly, and Scott Nielson

Photograph taken at the Gila Cliff Dwellings on the Gila National Forest, June 30, 2011